



## Media Release

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### **Blueprint for TAFE Institutes proposes Commonwealth fund TAFE degrees**

#### ***Priority for Skill Shortage Occupational areas***

The TAFE ***Blueprint for Australia's Tertiary Education*** sector released today by TAFE Directors Australia, advocates a role for TAFE Institutes to offer degrees -- with Commonwealth funding priority across skill shortage occupation areas.

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) is the peak body representing 54 TAFE Australian Institutes and five dual sector universities with TAFE divisions.

TDA released the *Blueprint* on tertiary policy ahead of the forthcoming Federal Election as the major parties approach issues of funding and regulation, following last year's Bradley Review of Higher Education.

The *Blueprint for Australia's Tertiary Education* proposes eight criteria be established which define "tertiary institutions" in Australia, including:

- Financial, governance and management capacity
- Commitment to educational outcomes for students from all backgrounds and regions
- Capacity to self-accredit to standards required, and
- Whether provision of tertiary education is the core activity of the organisation.

After consultation with TAFE Institute members, the TDA Board supported Federal funding for degrees where degree qualifications may assist in scheduled Skilled Occupational List (SOL) areas listed by Skills Australia and DIAC.

Martin Riordan, Chief Executive Officer of TDA, said the criteria would hopefully guide Federal Ministers, MPs and policy makers as they map the 'next stage' of targets set for higher qualifications under the Education Revolution.

"The Board also felt it appropriate that we establish realistic boundaries in the immediate period to TAFE Institutes being granted Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs), to align with degrees across skilled shortage occupation areas," Martin Riordan said.

"This approach is based on our newly released TDA Strategic Plan 2010-12, which supports Skilling Australia reform based on competition and social inclusion."

Martin Riordan added: "A threshold issue for the TDA Board was noting international experience in how public vocational colleges manage delivery of higher qualification.

"My own recent study trip to the U.S. revealed 14 American states have now legislated for Community Colleges to be funded to offer 4-year degrees – particularly in specialist skill course areas – with San Diego most likely to follow shortly with a trial under consideration in the State of California."

Martin Riordan said the Blueprint is one of three major vocational education policy initiatives currently being pursued by TDA. Other current VET policy includes:

- Joint commissioned research between TDA and the Australian College of Educators, reviewing best practice with vocational colleges and youth engagement with skills, and
- Joint commissioned research between TDA with DEEWR, analyzing the experience of international students enrolled at TAFE Institutes and ways to maximise their time while Studying in Australia.

The Blueprint for Tertiary Education will be circulated among Federal Ministers, MPs and education policy agencies, and will form a key theme for the TDA 2010 National Conference, '*TAFE in the Year of the Tiger*'.

*Further information:*

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